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January 29, 1975

Dr. Elizabeth S. Russell
Chairman
GSA Committee on Heredity, Race, IQ Statement
The Jackson Laboratory
Bar Harbor, Maine 04609

Dear Tibby,

My concern is that an "official" action of the GSA will be used as ammunition to result in the firing of or summary denial of research grants to people who, say, lean towards Jensen. (You may recall that in 1951 (+) I opposed Muller's motion requesting an official pronouncement against Lysenkoism on similar grounds).

I have less objection to an opinion poll*, especially if it offered more detailed structure for response.

The statement is not bad; but there are still a few places where I would prefer more obviously agnostic wording. And perhaps geneticists should disclaim any special expertise about I.Q. tests!

As to speaking out - I am very much in favor of individual options, less about group statements that may set precedents for stampedes later.

(See what's happening about hybrid DNA purported hazards! Tomorrow you may be attacked for breeding mice that, who knows, may threaten new kinds of pest outbreaks). If these kinds of statements are institutionalized, there will be plenty of demand for more on many other subjects.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

*Announcement should make it clear that GSA does not have rigorous professional criteria for membership (and the less for human genetics). Else Shockley will tear it to pieces by raising that diversion, especially when he is criticized on same grounds.

P.S. I have a student who is specifically interested in the history of genetics qua immigration laws. Who - who knew better - was silent? I have the contrary impression that the prevailing wisdom - and group expression - supported those laws at one time. Do tell me if I am wrong, and especially of any documentation. (Of course there weren't many "human geneticists" in those days!)

How does one obtain the 1974 thesis prepared by T.H. Eaigh, "Statistical methodology of the nature-nurture controversy in human intelligence"? Would GSA be doing a service by aiding in its distribution?